

Canboulay Dance Theatre Presents

MALTE

**December
12th-14th
2002**

**Betty
Oliphant
Theatre
404 Jarvis Street**



Canboulay Dance Theatre

Info: 905.737.1017

Maljo

Camboulay Dance Theatre
Betty Oliphant Theatre
in Toronto on Friday

REVIEWED BY **PAULA CITRON**

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Is there an editor in the house?

By PAULA CITRON

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The title in Creole patois signifies "evil eye," but Trinidad-born Taylor expanded this Caribbean meaning to embrace the concept "to conquer a mean spirit," which he defines as "the world's ills," specifically, the "affliction" of prejudice against both race and people with disabilities. Thus, the structure of the work takes the journey of an exorcism.

Visual artist Winsom provided Taylor with a beautiful backdrop -- an eye of ancient knowledge surrounded by Egyptian and African motifs -- which was also a viewing screen that showed moving pictures of historical events. Taylor himself designed an array of gorgeous costumes anchored in a stunning Afro-Caribbean aesthetic, while musicians Waleed Abdulhamid and Derek Thorne created an atmospheric, cinematic score using a variety of percussion and reed instruments that cunningly mirrored the shifting moods of the piece.

Taylor also put together a fine cast that included the venerable Jean Sheen, one of the pioneers of black dance in Canada, along with Denese Mitchell, Denyse Alleyne, Spirit Synott (performing in her wheelchair) and Taylor himself. Nneka Elliott as the orator did an effective job with the spoken word.

The two strongest segments were the two duets that Taylor, an outstanding dancer, performed with Synott and Mitchell respectively. With the very expressive, gutsy Synott, it was more of a trio, because Taylor also choreographed for the wheelchair itself to stunning effect.

With Mitchell, Taylor performed an erotic duet denoting both depravity and rebirth. Mitchell is a gorgeous dancer with an elegant body of controlled discipline that she meshed to Taylor's suppleness like a snake skin. The two moved as one in Taylor's finest choreographic moment.

But the first part of *Maljo* -- the coming of the affliction -- is simply too long and not "dancey" enough. The cast quivered and contorted to individual excess, which could have been more effective as unison choreography.